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081446Z Sep 03

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005680

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2013

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SUBJECT: IRAQ: CONGESTION AT HABUR BORDER CROSSING REQUIRES

ATTENTION - PROPOSAL FOR JOINT-TURKISH-IRAQI-US WORKING

GROUP TO STREAMLINE PROCESSING OF TRAFFIC

Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons 1.5 B and D.  
Recommendation at para 2.

1. (C) Over the past week, Post has fielded multiple reports from a variety of sources, including the CPA and the Turkish MFA, about delays, extremely long lines, extensive searches and unhappy truckers on both sides of the Habur Bridge/Ibrahim Khalil border crossing between Iraq and Turkey. Because the coalition uses this sole border crossing between the two countries to re-supply troops and to get urgently needed commodities like LPG and diesel fuel into Iraq, bottlenecks at the bridge are a serious source of concern and a strategic liability. Short-term solutions have reduced lines and/or expedited trucks carrying urgently needed cargo, but these ad hoc solutions do not solve the fundamental problem of limited capacity and duplicative procedures on both sides of the border. Given the interest on both sides of the border and in the coalition to have goods flow as quickly as possible, the requirement on both sides to screen trucks for contraband and ensure proper documentation, and the likelihood that the volume will continue to increase over time, we believe a joint US-Turkish-Iraqi approach to a solution is required.

2. (S) RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that a working group be convened at Habur/Ibrahim Khalil as soon as possible including experts from the Turkish and Iraqi sides, and reps from the CPA (including appropriate US Customs/border experts), US Mission Turkey and KBR, to discuss the possibilities for streamlining procedures and increasing capacity at the border crossing. One idea is joint processing of each truck, so that the Iraqis and Turks inspect once, together, then allow the truck to pass, rather than inspecting once on each side of the border. The details could be worked out by the working group. Short of some mechanism like this, we will continue to face long lines, delays, and finger-pointing across the border in both directions about who is responsible for the delays.

3. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.  
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